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FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2615
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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CJTF HOA
CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

UNCLAS ANTANANARIVO 000495

STATE FOR AF/EPS AND AF/E - MBEYZEROV

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [CASC](#) [CN](#)

SUBJECT: YEMENIA AIRLINES CRASH IN THE COMOROS

¶1. Following the June 30 crash of Yemenia Airlines flight 626 off the coast of the Comoros, Africa Command and CTJF-HOA responded to the GOC request for assistance by sending a C-130 Search and Rescue Team. The team arrived July 1, less than 24 hours after the crash. CTJF-HOA SeaBees and Civil Affairs Teams are also helping, coordinating with Comoran authorities to search the coast near the crash site; these teams will only/only conduct land-based efforts. The Mission's Comoros Officer was in Moroni at the time of the crash and has been coordinating with Comoran (and French) officials working from Moroni/Hahaya airport. The GOC and Comoran public have expressed gratitude for the rapid American response to their tragedy.

¶2. Post continues to seek to confirm for sure that no AmCits were onboard the Yemenia flight; manifests made available so far have not included nationalities. The media report only citizens of France, Comoros and Yemen (crew) were aboard. Post's Consular Officer checked names from the manifest and found only three that could possibly be matches, but we do not/not believe these were AmCits. Without dates of birth we cannot be certain yet. Post has confirmed with the Warden and tiny American community in the Comoros that they were not aware of any Americans onboard. The only remote possibility would be a dual-citizen, which Post is working to rule out with CA counterparts.

¶3. Army Colonel Ishmael of Civil Protection is leading Comoran coordination of search and rescue efforts. As of July 2, Comoran teams rescued one 13-year old survivor and have reportedly recovered some debris and remains of victims. French Cooperation Minister Alain Joyandet visited the Comoros briefly on July 1 and took the sole survivor back to Paris on his plane. France sent two boats and a helicopter to aid in the search, Yemen sent a team of divers, Madagascar sent a vessel, and Italy reportedly has another boat en route to the Comoros. Search efforts to date have found very little debris and the black box has not/not been located (as of 1400 local Thursday).

¶4. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has offered assistance in the investigation (the aircraft engines were Pratt and Whitney) and the GOC has accepted. Post is coordinating a possible NTSB investigation effort; the overall investigation will be led by France's NTSB counterpart, the BEA. We will send one officer and one FSN to Moroni on Monday to assist the NTSB effort. The Ambassador and DATT also arrive Monday for what will surely be a subdued Comoran National Day celebration on July 7. We cancelled our own "July 4" celebration, which would have occurred on July 7 in Moroni. President Sambu also departed the AU Summit in Libya to be in country following this national catastrophe.

¶5. Given Comoros' small population, most of the country is touched personally by this tragedy, and a period of national mourning will follow. Many of the over 150 Comorans and French-Comorans lost in the crash were returning to the Comoros to attend traditional wedding ceremonies held this time of year. In the Comoros, as well as at Comoran communities in Paris and Marseilles, there is much outcry against Yemenia Airlines for what is accused of operating "unsafe aircraft." As of July 2, Yemenia Airlines officials and the GOC appear to have made efforts to deflect criticism from the press and the public, blaming France for "slow and inconclusive response." Post is referring all press inquiries to Comoran authorities, noting that the American response is at the request of - and

coordinated with -- the Comoran Government.

MARQUARDT